

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
10_18_2023	5:00 PM DST	On Line Zoom Meeting
Facilitator	Gayle Huntress	
Minutes keeper	Jim Hemingway	
Committee Attendees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gayle Huntress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Schmidt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graeme Sephton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Hemingway Craig Martin
Other		
Approved minutes September 20, 2023		

Hut report: Graeme brought some replacement batteries to the hut to have on hand for use with the HVAC Controller and the SimpliSafe keypad. The faulty HVAC unit finally got fixed after many attempts by Jamrog to repair the damage done by power surges during the last big winter storm. This repair took some 9 months to complete.

SHELD has been submitting bills on a monthly basis to Gayle for installations and repairs. Maintenance repairs, such as those done in the hut, however, get submitted on a quarterly basis. Gayle is able to cross-reference these bills for service work with the service tickets that generated these service calls in an efficient way. Repair bills for major events like the two storms last winter are sent to Gayle immediately since they would involve making an insurance claim, the details of which must be submitted very soon after the storm damage has taken place.

Gayle meets with SHELD the first Wednesday of each month when issues of all sorts are discussed in depth. Gayle feels that the paperwork generated by this process between ShutesburyNET and SHELD is working well. Steve and Graeme expressed some concern that it might be best for SHELD to submit the maintenance bills every month instead of every three months, but Gayle thought that the current arrangement seems to be working well.

The first annual bill from National Grid for pole rental fees for almost \$16,000 unexpectedly appeared just a short time ago. We should expect to continue to receive this bill going forward. It is already part of our annual budget, we just haven't had to pay it until now.

Generator maintenance by Paciorek has been done recently. Becky, our town administrator, ordered this maintenance visit but did not inform the MLP that it was taking place, and so Graeme and Gayle received warnings from Kohler, the generator manufacturer, that our generator was no longer in "autostart" mode. Gayle has asked Paciorek to bill us separately for the maintenance work rather than bill the town for the work it did on both of the generators behind the Town Hall. In the future the MLP hopes that we will be able to work with Paciorek more directly so that we will know when these maintenance visits are taking place.

According to Graeme's research and his ability to monitor our electrical power consumption in the hut, he has determined that the hut is consuming about 12 megawatt hours of power per year

which is roughly double what the average home consumes in that time period. Graeme is still concerned about the generator's block heater power consumption, which is quite significant, that he hopes Kohler will make some changes to in order to make the backup generator operate in a more power efficient manner. He also feels that some changes need to be made to govern the cycle that takes place when power from the AC mains drops out for very short periods of time. The surges that often take place during power outages were the cause of the damage to the HVAC unit that took so long to repair. In the last year the Kohler generator has only had to provide emergency power to the hut on 10 different occasions. Some improvements need to be made in the way the Kohler generator reacts during power outages. Graeme hopes that Kohler will make some of these needed changes in the future.

Just 43 trouble tickets last month, 21 of which were non-technical.

Financial report from Gayle: we currently have a little over \$56K in our account. Gayle attended a state-wide listening session with MBI at FRCOG recently to evaluate some of the ways the Shutesbury MLP might be able to access some of the Federal and State money that will be allocated for a variety of broadband issues. The US Congress has appropriated over 42 billion for these concerns, and Massachusetts will be getting over 100 million for its share. Hopefully some of it will be made available to the Shutesbury MLP, funds that could be used in part for upcoming installations and new equipment.

When Jamrog sends its last final bill for labor, Gayle will submit all of the bills for the 9 month long HVAC repairs which should be covered by the Town's insurance to Becky, our Town Administrator, but so far there has been no response about if these will be covered by insurance from the town. The Shutesbury Fire Station's HVAC unit, identical to ours, was also damaged at the same time during the big snow and ice storm last winter.

Gayle recommended that we increase the subsidy for new fiber installations from \$300 to \$500. Inflation has made the cost of these installations rise significantly over the years. Currently the MLP gets about 4 to 5 new installation requests a year, the average cost of which is usually well over \$1,000. The least expensive install, a particularly simple one that Gayle has seen recently, was \$600. Others have been much more. The estimate we provide to new subscribers for a new installation which SHELD conducts, costs us \$150 and so, coupled with the \$300 installation subsidy, means that our cost is currently \$450 for every new installation. Gayle proposed that we raise this subsidy from \$300 to \$500 as of January 1st, 2024. The MLP voted 3-0 in favor of this proposal – Sephton aye, Schmidt aye, Hemingway aye.

Gayle is concerned about whether local contractors and building inspectors are aware of all of the considerations that go into installing fiber in areas of new construction as well as the costs of doing so, rather than let all of those considerations wait until the last minute. Where is the best place to insert ourselves into the process of new home construction so that new home owners know about the costs and the challenges that often come with connecting to our fiber network? This might be an issue that FRCOG might want to consider, here in Franklin County, since most of the towns in Franklin County share the same building inspector. And so FRCOG might be able to help with this issue going forward. Gayle will contact the building inspector for more details.

SHELD will be transferring our fiber on Wendell Road from the old to the new poles next month. All of the new National Grid poles for 3 phase power have been installed on Locks Pond Road up to the culvert where currently most of the 3 phase installation activity is taking place.

The router replacement issue was raised once again. The MLP is currently replacing defective routers at no charge unless they have been damaged in some way by the homeowner. In the future we will have to decide between three basic possibilities – 1) subscribers will have to buy and replace their routers on their own – 2) the MLP purchases a new fleet of non-managed routers and installs them, and 3) the MLP decides to purchase and install managed routers such as the Gigaspire U6 for all our subscribers. There are also hybrid solutions of subscriber paying part of cost, giving the subscriber option to use a managed router or not, or adding a rental fee for a router to the bill. This is a long term issue about which there will be much discussion well into the future as we track all of the changes that will be taking place in router technology, let alone how WiFi will be used and developed in the home.

MLP meeting adjourned at 6:35pm.